

September 9, 2011

Friends,

As we move into a beautiful weekend with the hint of fall in the air, it's once again a pleasure to share with you a few of the highlights of the past week in our great city. September is always one of my favorite months of the year as it showcases all that Augusta has to offer with events like the Westobou Festival, Arts in the Heart, the Border Bash and the ESi Ironman Augusta 70.3. Last year was my first experience in participating in the Ironman and I look forward to participating again this year just two weeks from this Sunday. I've shared with many of you that my inspiration to do the event came from the courage I've seen displayed by Brennan Simkins, William Chandler and Patrick Chance, as well as their families, in their battle against bloodborne pediatric cancer. Last year I had the opportunity to be a part of Team in Training to benefit the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and this week I joined with other local "celebrities" to serve as a waiter for a dinner at the Boll Weevil to raise money for the organization. During my time serving as mayor, I've always found it inspiring to see just how generous our community can be when it comes to serving a good cause and this year's fundraiser underscored this for me once more as the patrons of the event graciously donated to help children with blood cancers live better, longer lives. I would personally like to thank all those who came out to support this event as it shows me once again that working together, we can make a difference.

It has always been my firm belief that Augusta is an internationally known brand name associated with excellence and that as a city we should strive for excellence in all of our endeavors at every level. My confidence in making this statement comes from the fact that we are unique for cities of our size in that we host a number sporting events each year which bring us international exposure including the Masters Golf Tournament, the Augusta Futurity, the Augusta Southern Nationals and the ESi Ironman Augusta 70.3. I've often made the point that while each of these events has a tremendous measurable economic impact on our community, the economic impact of our city receiving international exposure throughout the year is equally important but much less quantifiable. A great example of this came this week when I had the opportunity to do an interview with Mike Buteau of Bloomberg News with regards to what the Ironman means to Augusta. Mike and I became acquainted through an interview he did with me last year concerning the economic impact of the Masters on our city. The thrust of the article he is now writing is that Augusta is a thriving city more than one week each year. A wonderful sidebar to our interview is that Mike is participating in this year's event and that he will be able to experience firsthand why our local race has become the largest Ironman event in the world. I would personally like to thank Mike for providing the world another glimpse into what makes Augusta such a special city to call home.

For the past several years, I have had the blessing of working with the Greater Augusta Healthcare Network (<http://www.georgiahealth.edu/son/gahn/index.html>). The organization was established in 2007 to address the great need for quality, affordable healthcare in Augusta and the surrounding communities bringing together a unique network of healthcare providers to collaborate on serving this common cause. Yesterday morning I had the opportunity to address those gathered for GAHN's community forum at the Richmond County Health Department on Laney-Walker Boulevard. After my remarks, I made it a point to stay and listen to the presentations of a panel of healthcare professionals who strive daily to address the vital public health issues facing our community. Although I knew many of the statistics with regards to our community, they were still

sobering just the same as our community ranks very high in the state on the list of teenage pregnancies, obesity, heart disease and reported HIV/Aids cases as well as other chronic health issues. During the panel presentations a thought hit home for me that I would like to share with you: what if local elected officials put as much time and effort into working together to help address and overcome these major public health issues as they often do into petty political bickering that ultimately leads to no good for our city? GAHN's efforts towards bringing together healthcare providers to selflessly, collaboratively and innovatively address the healthcare needs of the citizens of our community are undoubtedly making a difference and I would challenge all of our local elected officials to become a part of their efforts.

Earlier this morning, I had the honor of attending our annual "9-1-1 Day Celebration" at the Augusta 9-1-1 Center. During my remarks prior to declaring it "9-1-1 Day", I had the great pleasure of thanking all of the men and women who work so tirelessly every day to answer the needs of the citizens of our community during emergency situations. I would personally like to thank Director Dominick Nutter for inviting me to be a part of the program and to once again thank everyone at the 9-1-1 Center for all that you do for our community.

Several other highlights for me over the past week included meeting with Jeff Foley, Clint Bryant, Carol Rychly and Commissioner Matt Aitken to discuss Augusta State University's future growth; catching up with my friend Arlean Edwards on the "Talking it Up Show" and taping another edition of "The Means Report" with my friend Brad to air this Sunday at noon on Channel 6.

As we move into the weekend, I would like to remind everyone that the city will be holding a 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony on the Augusta Commons at nine-thirty on Sunday morning to mark the ten year anniversary of America's greatest tragedy. As we gather together to remember those who lost their lives on this tragic day, it is my sincere hope that we all remember that each day presents an opportunity for each of us to set aside our differences and work together for the greater good of our community and our nation as a whole as was done ten years ago in the wake of these horrific attacks on our country. In the end, it is my firm belief that our community and our nation are best served when we strive for and achieve a unity of spirit and purpose and I consider myself extremely blessed to serve as the mayor of a city where I see sterling examples of this happening throughout our community on a daily basis.

Thanks,

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